

The Age of the Imperial Church

From 313-590

Week #2 - June 21

Backdrop – the spread of Christianity even beyond the Roman Empire in spite of persecution by emperors like Decius, Constant Chlorus, Diocletian and Galerius.

“Despite external problems, created by persecution by the state, and the internal threat of dissension and schism because of heresy, the church came through all its difficulties with flying colors. Its closer association with the Roman state during the period between 313 and 590 was to bring into it many flaws that had not been problems during the periods of persecution.”

Earle Cairns

- I. Constantine (312) – Defeats his rival to imperial power Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge over the Tiber River and becomes Emperor of Rome.

The Edict of Milan 313 – granted religious freedom in the empire.

“Our purpose, is to grant both to the Christians and to all others full authority to follow whatever worship each man has desired.”

The church (Christianity) became a respectable religion under Constantine, rather than a persecuted minority. He gave Christian ministers the same personal and property tax exemptions as pagan priests (significant because they could now own land and build churches), he stopped the widespread persecution, he made Sunday a public holiday. He contributed to some incredible church structures to show his support of Christianity.

“Constantine’s religious policies had such an enormous effect on the course of Christianity that all of this time period (313-590) may be seen as a series of reactions and adjustments in response to these policies.”

Justo Gonzalez

These changes brought much good, but also some difficulties.

- A. It became difficult to distinguish true believers from those who just wanted to be part of an increasingly popular movement/religion.

Persecution has a way of purifying the church. If you don’t really believe in Christ, you aren’t going to stick around when belief in Him might lead to your death. Whereas in the middle of persecution you find a church generally comprised of convinced and sincere believers, when persecution fades and the state looks in favor upon the church, you then find those who have political ambitions, or general interest in spiritual things, or those who find it expedient personally to be a part of a church getting involved.

Kenneth Curtis – “Faith became easy, and sincerity suffered.”

B. Power and Politics became involved in the church.

Constantine was the master of power and politics and had great influence on how the church would use those things to its benefit. In fact, some say his edict providing religious freedom was a move of political expediency rather than the fruit of his own belief. It is possible that he felt like religion, Christianity in particular, might help to preserve a deteriorating classical culture. In other words, Christianity was his pawn to try and maintain the glory of the empire as he saw it.

Regardless, Christianity began to gain favor in the empire. So much so, that by 380-381, Christianity was declared to be the state religion.

Emperor Theodosius in 380 declared :

"It is Our Will that all the peoples we rule shall practice that religion which the divine Peter the Apostle transmitted to the Romans. We shall believe in the single Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, under the concept of equal majesty and of the Holy Trinity.

We command that those persons who follow this rule shall embrace the name of Catholic Christians. The rest, however, whom We adjudge demented and insane, shall sustain the infamy of heretical dogmas, their meeting places shall not receive the name of churches, and they shall be smitten first by divine vengeance and secondly by the retribution of Our own initiative, which We shall assume in accordance with divine judgment."

382 – Emperor Gratian ended the state's financial support for paganism and had symbols removed from the Senate House.

By 392 – pagan worship was in many places forbidden.

The problem was that, as a state religion, and in exchange for the government's protection, the government demanded the right to interfere with spiritual and theological matters (i.e. Constantine took on a position of arbitrator and theological leader at the council of Arles in 314 and Nicaea in 325).

Constantine demanded unconditional obedience to his pronouncements, even if they interfered with church matters and practices. He was supreme pontiff of the land and, as such, felt as though he could make decisions for the church.

Churches, before this time were small and more localized – meeting in homes, but under this newfound imperial favor, began to have church buildings that took on imperial flavor. Majestic buildings for public meetings, a shift even in the garb that bishops wore, to more imperial worthy clothing.

With the churches involvement with the powers that be, also came an increase in power for the church leadership (bishops).

"Bishops were becoming civic and political figures, and within the space of a few decades they were even players in the affairs of the state. As the vast resources of the emperor were made available to the churches, the inevitable corruption of money and power made its way into the highest offices of the Church."

Robert Wilkin

Arrogance, corruption, power plays, politicizing the church, bribes, etc. began to play a more active role in church leadership.

C. Doctrine was adversely affected

There were always false teachers and erroneous views from the foundation of the church, but when the church is under duress and persecution, doctrinal issues take a back seat to allegiance to Christ and His Word. The external persecution largely led to an inward unity amongst believers who were more concerned with a united front on that which was of most importance.

It wasn't that there weren't doctrinal problems before, we know there were because there are warnings about it all throughout the NT. But they were largely dealt with in a more localized sense (Paul's letters).

But when the persecution dissipated because the state accepted and endorsed Christianity, the doctrinal issues came to the surface and began to divide the church. There was also a type of syncretism going on with paganism and Christianity in many of the churches. The church began to take on a more imperial look, structure, and way of thinking that brought about doctrinal issues.

If Constantine's idea of a unified state was going to happen, they needed to have church that had unified dogma and doctrine.

This is where councils came into significance.

II. The Council of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed (325 AD)

The ecumenical or universal councils, as they are sometimes referred to, were established by the state to resolve differences of opinion or interpretations of Scripture within the church. To bring about widespread unity and agreement, if possible, instead of simply dealing with the issues on a smaller scale. There were 7 of these councils and Nicaea was the first.

One of the errors that emerged rather quickly after persecution settled down involved the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the nature of God (especially as it relates to Christ) was an issue from the earliest days of the church, but began to really create trouble during this time. It was crucial because the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most, if not the most, distinctive doctrines of Christianity.

There was a restlessness in the 4th century church about his doctrine. Again, it wasn't that others had never thought about it or debated it, it was that under great periods of persecution, doctrinal discussions such as these don't generally take on quite the notoriety. Soon the church was in upheaval over this doctrine with everyone calling somebody a heretic. This was a problem in Constantine's mind, because a divided Christianity could not bring together a crumbling empire.

"The same believers who, while Diocletian and Galerius ruled, had been the victims of terrible persecution, were demanding now that their fellow Christians who differed from them on points of doctrine be suppressed or banished from their churches by the power of the state."
Bruce Shelley

Quite a turn of events in ironic form.

A. The Problem -

Arius (a scholar and popular preacher in that day), upon hearing Alexander's (the bishop of Alexandria) teaching on "The Great Mystery of the Trinity in Unity" sometime round 318, responded by suggesting that this view made God out to be polytheistic. In his mind he was attempting to defend monotheism quite strongly. He was also trying to make Christianity easier to understand because people just couldn't understand the Trinity.

"Error is perennial and usually springs from the same causes in every age."
Earle Cairns

(The two things are man's pride and rationalizing)

He said it suggested that there were really 3 gods if they are all the same.

- The Teachings of Arius:

Jesus was **not** God.

Jesus was **sort of divine**, but not God.

Jesus was the first **created** being.

Arius' famous quote: "There was a time when Christ was not."

- These teachings set off a major dispute between Arius and Alexander.
- Alexander understood, rightfully, that all of salvation hung on the reality that Jesus was both fully human and fully God. Not just some kind of semi-divine hero, But God eternal.
- "Had He not been man, He could not have sympathized with us; had He not been God, He could not have saved us."
W. Graham Scroggie
- The church was being divided, clergy were taking sides, and the doctrine of salvation was at stake.
- Riots literally erupted in the streets over this issue.
- In an attempt to resolve this issue, Constantine called and presided over the council in Nicaea (in 325 AD).

B. The Solution -

Bringing together 300 bishops to discuss the matter. These were 300 of the brightest theological minds at the time. Constantine presided over the council but eventually left the leaders to figure this issue out.

- Eusebius was called upon to represent Arius' view insisting that Jesus had not always existed and that He was of a different essence than God. Jesus was not deity.
- Athanasius (just over 30 years old at the time) became a chief proponent of what is still the orthodox view today. He argued that Jesus had always existed and was of the same nature or essence of the Father.
- Anthony was also key in confounding the arguments of the Arian camp with his wisdom.

The diphthong that almost changed the world.

Arius argued that Jesus was "homoiousios" with the Father.
That is he had a **similar** nature with the Father.

Athanasius argued that Jesus was “homoousios” with the Father. That is that he had the same nature as the Father.

The council sided with Athanasius and here is the key statement
“Jesus Christ...God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father...”

All but a few bishops signed the statement of faith that resulted from the council.

“What is surprising is not that theological debate became entangled in political intrigues, but rather that in the midst of such unfavorable circumstances the church still found the strength and the wisdom to reject those views that threatened the core of the Christian message.”

Justo Gonzalez

The issue still remained a battle in the churches partly because of Arius' popularity and ability to convince others, but also because Constantine waffled on his stance on the issue depending on which bishop had his ear (Eusebius). It was a major issue until the council of Constantinople in 381 reaffirmed the statements made by the Council of Nicaea.

*Negative outcome of the council – the church and state were further linked together in a way that the church in the east would never really get away from. It became very much tied to the political power of the state. The state retained the power over church offices and keeping a church office (bishop) required gaining the emperor's favor. The state decided who would be banished or declared to be holding unorthodox doctrine.

Athanasius understood this all too well.

III. Athanasius and his letter recognizing the NT canon (367 AD)

- A. His life – born somewhere around 296 -299. Died in 373. Born in times of great persecution under Roman Emperor Diocletian and his successor Galerius. Grew up heavily influenced by monks as a child. (witnessed the change from persecution to relative peace, although his life was one of defending the faith and paying the price through exile and hiding – he was banished at least 5 times, largely on the basis of false accusations by Arians).

Present at the council of Nicaea and a most feared opponent of Arianism.

“The results of the incarnation of the Savior are such and so many, that anyone attempting to enumerate them should be compared to a person looking upon the vastness of the sea and attempting to count its waves.”

Athanasius

He was the successor to Alexander as Bishop of Alexandria in 328.

B. His Work – The issue of the Canon

You had the final book of NT (likely Revelation) completed between 94-96 AD with all the books gaining wide circulation in the early church.

From the time that each book of the NT was recorded, which of the written books/letters were to be a part of the canon (or standard) of Scripture was an issue of much debate.

We see the NT certainly affirming the OT, but we also see references to writings of Paul as being considered Scripture (2 Peter 3:16).

By the end of the second century (around 200) the 4 Gospels, Acts, and Paul's epistles were almost universally valued and looked upon as authoritative.

- The books in dispute were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.

There were a couple of criteria that helped them to decide which books should be recognized as part of the canon of Scripture:

1. Apostolic origin (including Paul) or authority
2. The use and circulation within the existing church
3. Evidence of the Holy Spirit's work

Of course, there were other writings in existence that spoke of Jesus and spiritual things, and some were even considered to have come from apostolic origin, so that created trouble within the churches.

In order to help the church guard against error Athanasius wrote a now famous letter, The Easter Letter, listing out the 27 NT books that should be regarded as Scripture. While other books might be useful, they were not to be treated as authoritative as the 27 books listed were. Those 27 books comprise the NT that we still hold today.

- His letter did not resolve the matter; it wasn't until the Council of Carthage in 397 that there was an official confirmation of his list.

*The key here is to remember that Athanasius, nor the council of Carthage, picked which books make up the Scriptures. They were simply confirming what God had already made apparent and brought together in His providence.

IV. Bishop Ambrose and his stand against the emperor (385, 390)

A. His Life – 339-397.

He was well educated and was actually quite successful in the political realm. He came from a wealthy family where his dad was prefect of Gaul. He rose to the position of imperial governor of Milan. As governor he was to oversee the election of a new bishop of Milan in 374 (a very explosive situation at the time) and, due to his handling of the situation, he was urged to take the position himself. Since the emperor approved of this idea, he took the position even though it was against his desires. He gave up his political career, gave his money to the poor, and took the position (which he took very seriously).

B. His Work -

He was a great administrator in the church, standing up against heresy and against the powers of the state. He was not someone who was afraid to challenge the imperial powers when it came to church matters.

1). He stood up to Empress Justina (mother of Emperor Maximus) when she wanted a basilica for Arian worship. Ambrose refused. Much conflict between Ambrose and Justina ensued, but Ambrose always stood firm.

2). He stood up to Emperor Theodosius in 390 when he ordered the execution of 7,000 Thessalonians who had rioted in Thessalonica. Ambrose spoke out publicly against Theodosius' decision and called him to repent before God. It is said that the next time Theodosius came to church in Milan, Ambrose met him with these words, "Stop! A man such as you, stained with sin, whose hands are bathed in the blood of injustice, is unworthy until he repents, to enter this holy place, and to partake of communion."

Theodosius would eventually come to terms with this and, in front of a great crowd, took off his royal garments and sought forgiveness for his sins.

This event actually became quite a turning point for the western Roman Catholic Church. The church began to recognize its potential power even over the state authorities. The power of the church to excommunicate was wielded as a powerful weapon against many of rulers and brought great rulers to their knees. This would never have happened in the Eastern Catholic Church. You begin to see the divergence and where that might head.

He was also an able preacher who the Lord used to bring Augustine to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He is credited with implementing the singing of hymns into the western church.

V. Augustine (bishop of Hippo) and his conversion (387)

“Because of the sheer weight of his work and his influence on the church of his day, Augustine is acclaimed as the greatest of the fathers of the church... He left over one hundred books, five hundred sermons, and two hundred letters.”

Earle Cairns

- A. His Life – 354-430, born into the home of a Roman official in North Africa (mom – Monica was a believer). Well educated in languages and rhetoric, but away from home in Carthage he lived a sensual lifestyle, trying to satisfy himself through sexual sin and false religion. He even took a concubine as a teen and she bore him a child. He eventually moved to Rome, and then to Milan where he taught rhetoric and met Bishop Ambrose. Ambrose played a pivotal role in getting Augustine to change his view that Christians were simple-minded. He went to Ambrose’s church to study his preaching style but God ended up penetrating his heart with Ambrose’s message.

In 386 or 387 he had a spiritual crisis that led to his conversion.

- He was struggling with his sin and its seeming victory over him so he went to meditate and think upon it. While meditating in a garden and heard a child’s voice singing a song with the words “take up and read” so he did. He opened his Bible to Romans 13:13-14 and the Lord used that to open his eyes to the truth.

Later Augustine wrote that at that moment “It was as though the light of faith flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.”

Soon after, he was baptized by Ambrose and afterward made his way to the city of Hippo in North Africa. He was pressured into being ordained as a priest sometime around 390 and eventually he became bishop of Hippo in 396.

B. His Work -

He was polemicist, a good preacher, an Episcopal administrator, an excellent theologian, a philosopher, and a historian. As a result of his works, he is known as one of the most influential theologians since Paul in the NT.

1. Confessions – perhaps the best known of his works and is one of the great spiritual autobiographies of all time. Completed in 401.

“Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee.” “Our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

2. On Christian Doctrine – an exegetical work dealing with his views on hermeneutics (science of interpretation). He insisted that one must consider the whole tone of Scripture in interpreting any given part of Scripture and that has had lasting value in the church.
3. On the Trinity – theological work

4. The City of God – a largely apologetic work, and arguably his greatest work. It came about in response to the sack of Rome in 410 (by Alaric and the Goths) being blamed on Romans turning to Christianity and away from classic Roman religion (paganism). He responded to the charge and defended the faith as the only source of true blessing in this world. He also provided a Christian interpretation of history through the description of two cities – the city of God (which was lasting) and the City of Earth (which was temporal, using the great city of Rome and its fall as an example). Every person in all of human history falls into one of the two. The two cities are at odds and in the end the city of God will win. This was of course referring to a spiritual kingdom rather than a physical one.

5. Augustine vs. Pelagius – his work in arguing against the beliefs of Pelagius are possibly the most widespread and influential of his works.
 - Pelagius was a monk from Britain who viewed the Christian life as one of constant effort through which sin could be overcome and salvation could be achieved.
 - Pelagius denied that sin was inherited from Adam. They were bad examples but that is it. There is no connection between Adam's sin and the moral condition of man.
 - Therefore, it is possible not to sin. If it was impossible not to sin, he felt as though that made sin excusable.
 - God gave us the ability to do right things, so it relies upon us to do so and be saved.
 - Man could choose God, God does not predestine anyone. He merely looks ahead and sees who will believe and who will not.
 - It relies upon man's power within himself to live a holy life (excluded the work of the Holy Spirit)

 - Augustine countered that with the teaching of inherited sin from Adam and that man was depraved and incapable of living free from sin. We are under the power and penalty of sin unless God acts.
 - Therefore, salvation was all of grace and God must choose man. Nothing could save from man's sinfulness except for the irresistible divine power of God at work in those whom He has chosen. The initiative of conversion is divine, not human.
 - Nothing but the same power that saved could also keep believers in the Christian life.
 - You can hear some of the doctrine that would be recovered during the Protestant Reformation.
 - Shortly after Augustine's death, in 431 the council of Ephesus officially condemned Pelagianism.

*The errors – purgatory. He regarded marriage as a sacrament. He believed that Mary never committed a sin as the mother of the sinless Christ.

VI. Jerome and his completion of the Vulgate (405 AD)

- A. His Life – 331-420, baptized around 360. In 386 he went to Palestine and lived in a monastic retreat in Bethlehem for 35 years. That move stemmed largely from his struggles with sin and a desire to get away from them, so he thought.

“He is outstanding...for his titanic and endless struggle with the world and with himself.”

Justo Gonzalez

At times it seemed as though he was a man against the world, being both very critical of heretics but also being very critical of orthodox believers who disagreed with him.

- B. His Work –

1. His greatest work was a Latin translation of the Bible known as the Vulgate. Damasus, the bishop of Rome from 366-385 wanted to extend the power of Rome's bishopric beyond the others and the way he felt he could grow the church in the west to greater power than the east was to have the western church become Latin. One of the ways he felt this could be accomplished was to translate the Bible into Latin.

So he set his secretary (Jerome) about that very task. Jerome began the work in 382 and by 405 he had translated the New Testament from Greek and the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin.

The finished work became known as the “vulgate” (which means common) because it was translated into the language most commonly used in the western churches.

It wasn't initially all that well received because some of the texts differed in his translation and people (like Augustine) were concerned about the changes and Jerome's authority to make them.

It eventually gained traction and up until recently, Jerome's translation was the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church.

2. He also wrote commentaries that are still in use today.

VII. The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD)

Although it had been established at the council of Nicaea, against the teachings of Arius, that Jesus was fully God, there was still much debate in the church as to the true nature of Christ and attempts were made to reconcile his humanity and his deity.

Church was split with the major players being Alexandria and Rome vs. Antioch and Constantinople. On some level this debate was a power play as much as it was an issue of doctrinal exactitude. The bishops in those cities were known as patriarchs and were considered the highest authorities both in the church in the east and west.

- Alexandrian school – emphasized Jesus' Divinity.
(Apollinarius, Eutyches)
- Antiochene school – emphasized Jesus' humanity.
(Nestorius)

Council of 400 bishops convened in Chalcedon. Was convened to discuss many of the false teachings being spread by men such as Apollinarius, Eutyches, and Nestorius.

1. The Teachings of Apollinarius (310-390 AD, Bishop of Laodicea in AD 361):

- Jesus was **One Person**.
- Jesus had a **Human Body**.
- Jesus did not have a **Human Mind or Spirit**.
- Jesus' mind and spirit were only **Divine**.
- Jesus therefore was **Not fully Man**.

*Condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

2. The Teachings of Nestorius (381-452 AD, a popular preacher in Antioch and beginning in AD 428 was bishop of Constantinople):

- Jesus existed as **Two Separate Persons**. (Siamese Twin like)
- Jesus had both a **Divine** person and a **Human** person.
- Both of Jesus' persons existed in **One Body**. Associated but not united.

*Condemned at the council of Ephesus in 431

3. The Teachings of Eutyches (378-454 AD, the leader of a monastery near Constantinople):

- Jesus did not possess a fully **Divine Nature**.
- Jesus did not possess a fully **Human Nature**.
- The Human nature was absorbed into the divine nature creating a **Third or New Nature**.

(side note – also known as monophysitism which led to the breaking away from Eastern Orthodox church and the establishment of the Coptic church).

4. The Teachings of Arius:

- Jesus was **Not** God.
- Jesus was **Divine**, but not God.
- Jesus was the first **Created** being.
- Arius' famous quote: "There was a time when Christ was not."

*Condemned at Council Nicaea in 325

The response of the council:

Chalcedonian Definition

"We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us."

"Chalcedonian Box"

The purpose of the council was not to fully explain how God could be both fully man and fully God; rather it was to put parameters around what was correct and incorrect as far as interpretation goes. The council said "However this occurred, we know it did not occur in these ways."

"The merit of the Chalcedonian statement lies in the boundaries it established. In effect, it erected a fence and said, 'Within this lies the mystery of the God-man.'"
Bruce Shelley

This was the first council in which the Pope (Pope Leo) played a major role. This would lead to further battles between Rome and Constantinople.

VIII. Benedict and the monastic order (529 AD)

Monk – derived from a Greek word meaning “Solitary”

While there had always been those who chose to live the lifestyle of a monk from the earliest days of the church, there may have been two influences that led to the development of a monastic order around this time period.

1). The acceptance of the Christian religion by the Roman Empire. This led to the church being filled with many who were a part of the church because it was the popular thing to do, not because they were true believers. There were many who cared not about living under the cross of Christ, but who cared about power, position, and prestige.

You also had emperors like Constantine who were very closely connected to the leadership in the church but who believed that pagan religions and Christianity were all ultimately pointing to the same deity.

Those who saw these shifts happening, and wanted no part of it, separated themselves from it by withdrawing.

2). The monastic order came about largely in response to the internal decay of the Roman Empire by the barbarians, who also had infiltrated the church and were bringing their pagan practices into the church. Seeing the impact pagan thinking had on the church and the Roman society at large led people to despair of what society was becoming. Cutting oneself off from society and becoming a monk became an attractive option for many.

“The hermit (monk) often fled, then, not so much from the world as from the world in the church. His protest of a corrupt institution led him into the dangers of a pronounced individualism.”

Bruce Shelley

The monastic order was marked by self-denial and ascetic practices. Sometimes with extreme things like, standing on top of poles for days, going long periods of time without food or sleep, depriving themselves of anything that the church might deem good. All in the name of pure commitment to God, clearly distinguished from the mixed motives of those in the church, at least in their mind. There were more balanced monastic communities who even responded to the extreme nature of the others by living more simple (communal) lives.

Some based on a desire not to be totally excluded from good teaching, and having a conviction that they could not love others if totally cutoff from them, began to live in with others in community. First official communal monastery instituted by Pachomius around 320.

They, of course, used Scriptures about not being of the world and Paul’s apparent advocacy of celibacy in 1 Cor. 7 to defend their positions.

- Men like Anthony, Simon the Stylite, Pachomius, Basil were leaders in the movement.

- Men like Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrose gave it popularity by advocating it in their writings.

One of the great leaders of western monasticism was Benedict of Nursia (480-542).

- He lived, off and on, as a hermit in a cave from about 500-529
- He founded the monastery of Monte Cassino in 529
- He eventually controlled several monasteries.
- He came up with a "Rule" or standard of the life of a monk in organization, worship, work, diet, and other areas of life. Based on things previous monks like Basil had put forward.
- His vision was for monastic communities to be self-sustaining communities so that they never had to go outside the monastery.
- He made those who wanted to be monks make 3 vows: vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience (to the rule and to monastery leaders)
- He operated on the theory that "Idleness is the enemy of the soul" so they had 7 daily services, personal study time, work, etc.
- The Benedictine Rule gained wide traction by the 7th century and was the standard rule in the West by the year 1000.

The issue those in the monastic order found is that sin still lingered even when they separated themselves from the worldliness they perceived both in the pagan world and in the church. Their temptations may have changed, and the ways they might cave to their temptations may have looked different, but temptation to sin is inescapable even in the life of a believer. So they tried all the more and found more and more ways to deprive themselves, but to no avail. What ended up happening in many cases was to lose sight of the very gospel they felt compelled to abandon everything for in the first place.

While started with good intentions, as humans are want to do, they swung the pendulum too far and overcorrected. Many found in this lifestyle a substitute for the spiritual heroism of folks in the days of persecution.

This movement became so big that a vast majority of church leaders by the 5th and 6th centuries were connected in some way to monasticism. They made great contributions to preserve writings of the church Fathers and other literature and they were integral in preserving much that is good in Christianity through the Middle Ages. They were also a great mission sending agency of sorts throughout the centuries and were very effective in the spread of Christianity through difficult times in European history.

IX. Progression of the Papacy

Somewhere between 313 and 450, the Roman bishop became known as the first among equals with all other bishops. It was kind of a slowly progressing establishment. Certain towns became prominent and the bishops in those towns took leadership over smaller towns (affirmed by the council of Nicaea in 325). As things spread out, certain bishops were exercising authority over smaller country parishes. By 440, and Leo I's accession to the power as bishop of Rome, the Roman bishop began to claim superiority over all other bishops. Because it made sense to centralize power, it was essentially accepted and the bishop of Rome became the central figure in matters like deciding doctrine. Rome was the largest and wealthiest church, it was the imperial capital, it had a good reputation for orthodoxy and charity. They also pointed to Peter as the first "pope" and they say he started the church in Rome along with Paul, and that his martyrdom in Rome points to those who succeeded him as bishop of Rome, to have the highest power.

In 445 – Emperor Valentinian III (due to a weakening empire through attacks by Visigoths, and in desperation to keep it together) issued an edict recognizing the supremacy of the bishop of Rome in spiritual affairs. So that what was enacted by the bishop became "law for all."

Pope Leo cemented his papal authority through the council of Chalcedon and his leadership there.

However, also at the council in 451, the council ruled that there should be a head of the church in the east (Constantinople) as there was in the West (Rome). Roman Church (Western Empire), Greek Church (Eastern Empire).

Despite that declaration, Leo asserted his power over all the empire after the Vandals attacked Rome (455) and he prevented full destruction. He took on the title of Pontifex Maximus (high priest of religion throughout the land), a declaration of absolute power (at least religiously speaking).

This coming at a time when the western portion of the Roman Empire was crumbling. The last emperor being deposed in 476 by the Germanic tribes who came in and took over. Under the instability of the empire, the stability of the church provided much continuity and continued to grow in influence and power in both the east and the west.

Foundations, or beginnings of, much of the Roman Catholic Church are found in this time period.

Other notable things during this time period – St. Patrick goes to Ireland as a missionary, Columba goes to Scotland as a missionary, the council of Ephesus (431), council of Constantinople (381), the donatism controversy, influential leaders made impacts (Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom).